

Land Trust dedicates Harvego preserve

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Grayson Coney, Tsi-Akim Maidu Tribe cultural director, offers a traditional Nisenan blessing for the Harvego Bear River Preserve.

Placer Land Trust's Earth Day dedication of the Harvego Bear River Preserve brought together more than 200 participants for the ceremony and property tours.

The Trust for Public Land and the Harvego family also hosted the event, held at the Bruin Ranch north of Auburn.

Amidst spring wildflowers and budding oak trees, Placer Land Trust Executive Director Jeff Darlington thanked the primary project funders on behalf of the Bear-Yuba Partnership

"Placer Land Trust was founded 20 years ago," said Darlington. "I can't think of a better way to enter our third decade than by protecting this magnificent property, which brings our total up to 7,171 acres of land permanently protected for future generations."

In December 2010, after nearly a decade of work, TPL and Placer Land Trust acquired Harvego Bear River Preserve to permanently protect it for open space, water quality, wildlife habitat, and compatible private agriculture and public recreation uses.

Funding for the acquisition and ongoing management of the property was provided by the state of California's Wildlife Conservation Board, Placer County, the Harvego family and Placer Land Trust members.

Dave Sutton, Sierra project director for TPL, spoke about the partnership's efforts to protect the remainder of Bruin Ranch.

"Over the next two years, we hope to protect another 526 acres of this ranch," he said. "Over 2,000 acres of adjacent land has already been protected by the members of the Bear-Yuba Partnership, and another 1,500 acres nearby have been protected by other organizations, making Harvego Bear River Preserve the centerpiece of a regional landscape-scale vision of connected and protected open space in the Sierra Nevada foothills."

At the Earth Day event, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy announced that it has awarded Placer Land Trust with a \$1 million grant to protect the remainder of Bruin Ranch, approximately one-third of the funding needed to complete the property acquisition.

The remaining 526 acres of the Harvego property are the most at risk from future development, and contain magnificent oak savannah, streams, ponds, and scenic vistas. This portion of the property also provides an important connection with other conserved lands, and according to Darlington contains the ideal area for a trailhead staging area.

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“This project really does it all – it preserves and enhances social, economic and environmental well-being, and it touches on everything that is important to the conservancy as the state’s representative for conservation and community sustainability in this area,” said SNC Program Manager Kerri Timmer. “We hope we can be a catalyst to attract additional funding to protect the remaining 526 acres as soon as possible.”

For the dedication ceremony, local cookbook author and chef Laura Kenney provided PlacerGROWN appetizers, Granite Bay Boy Scout Troop No. 121 provided event support and Tsi-Akim Maidu Tribe Cultural Director Grayson Coney provided a traditional Nisenan blessing for the property. Following the ceremony, land trust staff and local naturalists led several hikes on the property, exploring the granite peaks, oak woodlands, spring-fed ponds, and the majestic Bear River.

“This is a truly special property with a ton of public benefits, and we look forward to sharing it with the public soon,” Darlington said. “We’re working with the landowner, the neighbors, and Placer County to make it safe to allow public access to Harvego Bear River Preserve. Until then, it’s important to remember that this is still private property and a working cattle ranch. We have a significant amount of fundraising left to do to perfect public access, and we appreciate any financial support the community can provide to make this vision a reality.”